

Developing Your Career Management Skills – During Foundation

Career management and career management skills - what's the difference?

Career management is about making and implementing realistic and well informed decisions, and having the ability to adapt your plans in the light of changing circumstances and priorities. In order to be successful at career management you will need to have developed career management skills. These skills will help you survive and succeed in the challenging and changing work environment of medicine.

Career management skills – what are they?

These include skills such as: Self-analysis, self-promotion, negotiating, networking, managing time and priorities, decision-making, action planning, political awareness, spoken and written communication and team-working.

Why are career management skills so important and why do I need them?

The world of medicine is constantly changing and specialties are evolving as governments change their health priorities and ways of treating patients develop. It is very important that you keep abreast of these changes, not only can it help you choose the best specialty for you but it will help you to understand what recruiters will be looking for as you face greater competition for vacancies.

Approaches to career management

Although there are many approaches to careers management the process is commonly regarded as having four stages:

1. Thinking:

About yourself, consider your strengths and weaknesses, skills, interests, values, experience and knowledge. *You need to understand yourself* and develop the art of self-awareness and reflection. Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

2. Researching:

Opportunities and answering questions such as; What specialties are available? • What do they involve? • What are the entry requirements? How many specialties? What does the work involve on a day-to-day basis? What are the lifestyle implications? Is there any potential for research or travel? What's the earning potential? What is the daily work environment like? How competitive is a particular specialty? Is it growing or declining?

3. **Choice/decision-making:**

This is about linking yourself and opportunities. *What is your decision making style?* Career Planning is about choices. Where do I start with exploring which specialty? What is important to know and what is irrelevant? What do I include in my application form? Which interview should I attend? Everything that you learn about yourself and your career options will eventually lead to the point where you have to make important and life- impacting choices. Maybe spend some time reflecting on how you make decisions and being aware that there are a range of decision-making strategies that you can use to help you.

4. **Action Making it all happen!**

The final bit of the model is putting things into action and making your career plans a reality, not just an aspiration and this will include job search and self-presentation, selling yourself to a potential employer, convincing them that you have what it takes, or gaining further training or experience.

Some people argue that there is an ongoing fifth stage, review, in which you keep yourself and your career under scrutiny to ensure that you are evolving.

Alternative approaches to career management

Krumboltz's:

Approach of 'Planned Happenstance' implies that although there is a place for the traditional 4 stage model of career planning as above, because of the constant changes in the employment market, these stages alone don't equip people with sufficient career planning tools. So in addition to working through the 4 stages, he proposes that people need to develop 5 key skills in order to recognize, create and use the opportunity that arises from career opportunities.

Curiosity:

Exploring new opportunities – Looking and finding out about specialties that you have not yet encountered? How can you be sure that you would hate a particular line of work if you know almost nothing about it?

Persistence:

An important skill for lifelong career planning is not giving up when you meet your first hurdle. (Many doctors can reach an advanced stage of their career before they experience a setback – and can then be disproportionately thrown off course when they fail an exam or are unsuccessful in applying for a particular training post). If you encounter a setback you need to ask yourself what you can do differently next time, to increase the chances of eventual success.

Flexibility:

Different specialties are not all equally competitive. And there is often regional variation in the availability of job opportunities. What are some of the ways in which you could become more flexible in your career planning?

Optimism:

It can be pretty demanding working as a junior doctor and also trying to plan the next stage of your career. In this situation it is easy to get frustrated when you encounter setbacks. As an alternative, focus on situations at work that you know you handled really well and what can you learn about yourself, or about aspects of work that seem to suit you.

Risk Taking:

The theory is not suggesting that you should thoughtlessly take career risks. But if you are unsure what specialty training path you want to follow after foundation, working abroad, or maybe getting a temporary job in a different specialty in the UK, may be a sound career move. As long as you can demonstrate eventually how the experience has helped you with your career decision making, and has made you a better candidate for the specialty you finally choose.

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